

Carl J.

Carl J. Levinson, MD, 1927–2011

Paul Alan Wetter, MD

How fortunate that distinguished leaders are amongst us who exemplify excellence and push the boundaries for the rest of us.

Carl J. Levinson was an innovator, leader, clinician, philosopher, scientist, teacher, dear friend, and travel companion.

I have two nicknames for Carl. One he was aware of “The Thorn in My Side,” the other he was not “The Ever-Ready Bunny.”

The reference to Carl as the battery powered toy that keeps going and going was obvious, nothing slowed him down, even in the most difficult of times. When faced with an illness that would have put most of us in an easy chair, Carl repeatedly got up, dusted off, and picked up the pace, without comment or fanfare.

Carl joined SLS in its early stages and was always there, serving in almost every capacity to help foster multispecialty cross-pollination of ideas and learning that he so believed in. He was the fourth President of SLS and served for many years as a Board Member, Editor, and Program Director. He was especially devoted to making Video an integral part of MIS education.

Carl, the “Thorn in My Side,” always pushed me, SLS and others for the best in everything we do. He questioned, probed, pushed, suggested, and persisted. When I look back over the first 20 years of SLS, I see that we have become very much related to Carl’s ideas and persistence.

With such a mentor, we are pushed to become much more than we could have been, to strive to achieve beyond ourselves. Carl exemplified this in his character not only for SLS and me but also in other organizations and places, such as AAGL, in Milwaukee, at Baylor, in San Francisco, and ultimately at Stanford. He influenced many leaders in the field today. To name just a few: Camran Nezhat, Robert Zurawin,

Moty Pansky, Arnaud Wattiez, and these are just a few of the many.

My wife Janis and I had the great fortune to travel to medical meetings and occasional side trips with Carl and his wife Naomi. At various cafés, we had many long and insightful conversations about improving medical education, surgery, art, music, gardens, politics, and especially family. Carl loved Naomi, his work and friends, and his two high-achieving sons Mark and Neil, and especially his grandchildren. Carl and Naomi, always equals in intellect and understanding, could debate any topic and within five minutes were both happy thinking that they had each won the argument. Visiting museums with Naomi, the consummate Art Historian and Jewelry Designer, has been an incredible experience; she usually knows more about everything there, its history, how it was made, and what it means, than the resident experts.

Carl was a gifted toastmaster; his view about things, his personality, his keen intellect, philosophy, and wit can best be exemplified in his own words. Several years ago after Carl was stricken with a serious illness, he sent the following letter, which says so much about him.

WISDOM OF CARL J

A new year’s resolve and confession

Learning that I had early Parkinson, a ‘bummer,’ was bad enough, UNTIL. . . . I was given the entire script. It is difficult to truly comprehend what it means to have your driver’s license revoked (permanently)! It means that, unless you had your hermit’s degree renewed recently, you are now dependent on your wife (usually) to take you EVERYWHERE, meaning to go to a store or meeting, or to have lunch with a friend, or to get stamps, or the evening paper, or to go to the pool/beach or just to escape!

I am blessed with a reasonably reasonable wife, a faithful son who just moved to California to be in Silicon Valley (and lives only 10 minutes away) and a special friend who says “any time. . . . me, just call me”; this has been tested and is valid. And so life goes on. . . .

Nevertheless, I did go into a state of funk (“Why me?”), which resulted in my being incommunicado— MY problem! This attempt is to come back to the real world and catch up with

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the people who bring fond recollections; up front are the years with SLS. Each and every one of you has provided me with knowledge, support, good time and conversations, humor, and experiences of value in many categories. For all this, I am grateful and take this opportunity to wish you well for the next decade and beyond, good health (no matter how Washington messes with it) and a very positive outlook on life.

*Warm regards,
Carl J*

Carl ON MISTAKES

“If you do something wrong, at least enjoy it.”

Carl ON TRAVEL

“Naomi is warm on Scotland (books say ‘not much to see’), and Carl is always wanting to sharpen his French or his Spanish.”

“Where there are 2 Jews, there are 3 opinions.”

Carl ON PLANNING AN EVENT

Guests arrive

Buffett

Show

Brief welcome and humor

Congrats and FINIS

Carl, Congrats on a life well lived.

Beginning with MIS Week, SLS, MIRA, SRS Joint Annual Meeting and Endo Expo in Boston, September 2012, Carl will be remembered with the Carl J. Levinson Best Video Award.